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ABSTRACT

Although German influences in North America were prominent in the decades just before and after 1900, the advent of World War I marked a major decline in the ethnic identity and bilingualism of German-Americans. Specifically, the German communities in Ontario and the Prairie Provinces in Canada and the Midwest and Great Lakes States in the United States experienced the decline. Despite lack of official status as a national language, bilingual schools and the teaching of German were prevalent in German-Canadian communities prior to World War I. However, as a result of political pressures, in 1916 Manitoba passed education legislation which omitted provisions for teaching a second language. Further, returning war veterans became a potent political group which argued against any concession to cultural pluralism. In the United States, German-Americans became intensely loyal to the American cause. However, when war was declared in 1917, schools, teachers, and textbooks became the focal points for public animosity toward anything German. By 1918, 15 states had restricted German instruction. Confronted by pressures, the majority of German-Americans sought to relinquish their national identity and assimilation occurred rapidly. (Author/KC)

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The Decline of German Language and Culture in the North American Heartland, 1890 - 1923

by

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (New York, NY, March 18-21, 1982).

ABSTRACT

"The Decline of German Language and Culture
in the North American Heartland"

Jerrold B. Barnell

In the years preceding the advent of World War I, German-American and Canadian communities in the Midwest, Ontario and the Prairie Provinces supported a wide range of educational and cultural activities. With the beginning of hostilities, discriminatory legislation all but eliminated bi-lingual schools and German as a language of instruction. In an atmosphere of wartime hysteria, ethnic self-denial became a common psychological response of Germans living in North America. In the United States, the War and its aftermath was used by patriotic groups to achieve their goals of Americanism. In Canada, bi-lingualism was interpreted to mean English only, except in Quebec where the presence of French-Canadians demanded a more accommodating approach.

The effect of World War I on German language and culture in North America provides comparative educators and others with an unusual opportunity to assess the cross-cultural impact of a single event on a linguistic minority residing on either side of an international frontier.

Educational researchers have all but ignored this type of historical evaluation; yet, there were similarities and differences in the development of German-speaking Canadian and American communities before and during World War I. Prior to 1914, Germans comprised a small but cohesive community in Canada; they were concentrated in Berlin (later Kitchener)--Waterloo districts of Ontario and the Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta where they constituted in 1911 no less than 10 percent of the population, which was double the Ontario percentage. German-Canadians were all but absent from Newfoundland, Quebec and New Brunswick; they accounted for 3 percent of the Nova Scotia population and 8 percent in British Columbia.[1]

The minority status of German-Canadians was reinforced by the numerical dominance of English and French-speaking Canadians who together accounted for over 70 percent of the population.[2] By way of contrast, German-Canadians could claim 5.6 percent. These figures are based on ethnic origin rather than language facility or cultural affinity. As early as 1911, there were elements of the German-Canadian community who by virtue of long residence in Canada could no longer converse in German. Due to the geographic concentration of Germans in the North American heartland, the paper will focus attention on German communities in Ontario, the Prarie Provinces, and Great Lakes States.

For all of Canada's history, the concept of bi-lingualism has invariably applied to the French-English language issues; this is based on the numerical advantage of both cultural groups as well as legal preferences accorded them under the British North American Act. French and English received parity as official languages; significantly, no mention is made of German or for that matter other European languages.[3]

Despite lack of official status as a national language, bi-lingual schools and the teaching of German was prevalent in German-Canadian communities until World War I. The pre-disposition to teach German or perpetuate Germanic culture depended on many variables. Perhaps, more than other immigrant groups coming to the New World, Germans were divided into factions based on religious and political persuasion. There were German-Catholics, Lutherans, Mennonites, Jews, Huttites, and non-believers of every shape and description. Politically, Germans ran the gamut from those advocating community ownership of property to others who admired the Kaiser and longed for a Pan-Germanism that might eventually include Canada. For instance, a visitor to Berlin, Ontario in 1896 reported that a large replica of Kaiser Wilhelm I dominated the entrance to a city park. A statue of Queen Victoria located nearby appeared to be of scant interest to local inhabitants.[4]

German bi-lingual schools were much more likely to be established in an area where German residents were in the majority or an important minority; recency of immigration along with a strong rural base helped preserve the ethnic identity of German communities in the Canadian West. These settlements were often far removed from the mainstream of North American society. Due to adverse weather conditions and lack of access to transportation, ethnic enclaves remained linguistically and culturally intact until well after World War I ended.

Provincial law relating to bi-lingual schools was an important determinant influencing the status of German. In Ontario, German-speaking students won the right in April, 1890, to receive instruction in German reading, grammar, and composition if this was requested by the parent or guardian. Thus, German was permissable as a language of instruction along with English, which was mandatory.[5] However, this regulation became a matter of controversy in the pre-World War I era, not so much because of the presence of German, but the English-speaking majority clamored for revision because of the alleged inability of French-speaking schools to teach English with effectiveness. Bi-lingualism was a consistent source of tension between English and French-speaking communities. Militant Anglo-Canadian nationalists wanted English and only English taught in the public schools.[6] After World War I erupted, German was removed from the curriculum. The lack of a strong population base combined with massive casualties inflicted on Canadian fighting forces mitigated against any protest, offical or otherwise.

Ontario alone contributed over 240,000 men and women to the Canadian military which numbered 616,000.[7] In 1918, nearly a tenth of the entire population of Ontario served in the armed forces and over 11 percent, or 68,000 Canadians had been killed on the battlefields.[8] These losses created an atmosphere of anti-Germanism that pervaded nearly every aspect of Canadian life. Not surprisingly, the University of Toronto, in response to public pressures was forced to suspend German professors and Berlin changed its name officially to Kitchener as a way of shedding its Teutonic image.[9]

Although French-Canadians had at one time in the 1800's been a majority group in Manitoba, they formed a distinctive ethnic minority

towards the turn of the century. The Act of 1890 further confirmed their less than equal status politically and educationally because public support for education was to be denied any school that was not free and undenominational.[10] Since nearly all French-Canadians wanted their offspring to receive a Catholic education, the effect of this legislation was to deter French-Canadians from sending their children to public schools; this gave rise to high rates of non-school attenders.
In 1896, the legislation was altered to provide that when ten pupils speak French or languages other than English a bi-lingual school could be established.[11] Although this regulation took effect in 1897, it did not end the language controversy in Manitoba. The Act of 1896 did not provide for adequately trained teachers nor did it disallow the establishment of bi-lingual schools in Germany, Polish, and Ukranian. With few exceptions, each language group set out to found its own bi-lingual schools. The degree of bi-lingualism varied widely in the German school sector with the inadequacy of bi-lingual English-German teachers most apparent in schools dominated by religious sects. It was reported that in one school not a single teacher knew English well enough to teach it. Conversely, the most truly bi-lingual schools in Manitoba were also to be found in German-speaking areas.[12]

By 1916, the impact of the legislation was evident. The Special Report on Bi-Lingual Schools promulgated by the Manitoba Department of Education, revealed that as of February 1, 1916, there were 126 French bi-lingual schools with 234 teachers and 7,393 students. Sixty-one school districts operated German bi-lingual schools with an enrollment of 1,840 students. Eastern Europeans maintained bi-lingual schools in 114 school districts with an enrollment of 6,013 pupils.[13] The combined

enrollment of bi-lingual German and Slavic speaking schools was greater than the total number studying French.

The pattern that emerged in pre-World War I Manitoba was that majority Anglo-Canadian schools were almost always mono-lingual. French-Canadian schools resisted teaching English because of inadequacy in teacher preparation and a lack of commitment to the principle of bi-lingualism. Bi-lingual Polish and Ukrainian schools suffered from poorly trained teachers as well as frequent geographic isolation from English-speakers.[14] Although Ukrainians and Poles formed the newest immigrant pool in western Canada, they were held to the same educational standards for teacher preparation as other groups whose native language was English or those who had resided in Canada for several generations. One weakness of bi-lingual schools was lack of balance between the two languages; they all too often relied heavily on the mother tongue rather than English. Not uncommonly, children completed primary schooling without learning the rudiments of English or the native language.

As a result of political pressures, the provincial legislature in 1916 passed for the first time compulsory education legislation along with Clause 258 which omitted provisions for teaching a second language.[15] Training schools previously established for Ukrainian and Polish schools were disbanded. Requirements for English literacy were strengthened. Supporters of the repeal of 258 were emphatic on their insistence on the primacy of English; they affirmed that "we do not deny the educational and cultural value of other languages."[16] However, statements about the importance of the cultural value of other languages had little meaning. The repeal of 258 was not only intended to assure the pre-eminent position of English; it was also designed to prevent Anglo-Canadian children from

learning a second language. Previously, it was not an unusual occurrance in areas of the Province that were predominantly German or Slavic-speaking for German or Ukrainian to be taught to Anglo-Canadian children. The Minister in charge of education convinced the House that learning a second language was now redundant.

By 1918, Winnipeg was one of the most ethnically heterogeneous cities in all of Canada, populated by Canadian-Germans, Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, along with the two majority ethnic groups. Due to a combination of circumstances, ethnic and class friction erupted in the now famous Winnipeg General Strike, which lasted from May 15-June 29, 1919.[17] Although this event was not directly tied to education, much of the ethnic tension that did arise in 1918 could be traced to disagreements over bi-lingual schools.[18] Bishop Budka of the Ukrainian Catholic Church insisted that bi-lingualism was a right of Ukrainians. These views aroused the anger of returning war veterans and Canadian nationalists who attempted to link the advocates of bi-lingualism with Bolshevism and the enemy cause in World War I.

The word Austrian was often used to describe Romanians, Ukrainians, and Poles. While all or parts of these areas were under the control of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, the motive for the widespread use of the term is suspect.[19] It was a misnomer because Austria was an enemy of Canada and a loyal ally of Germany. To characterize Poles from Galicia or Romanians from Transylvania as Austrian, nurtured an image of someone who was potentially disloyal to the Crown. In a wartime atmosphere of super-nationalism, it was a foregone conclusion that bi-lingual schools would suffer. The ethnic groups supporting bi-lingualism were not part of the establishment; they were underrepresented in all aspects of Manitoban life. The returning war veterans became a potent group politically who

argued against any concession to cultural pluralism. Mono-lingualism was equated with Canada for Canadians. German bi-lingual schools were inextricably linked with the enemy and with eastern European immigrants who were subjected to public derision and acts of bigotry.[20]

A frequently repeated charge used to criticize bi-lingual schools was their low academic standards.[21] But this was a false issue. After all, if standards were the central issue special monies and efforts could have been expended to train specialists for Ukrainian, German, and Polish schools. But the question that was left unresolved had to do with the shape and purpose of Canadian pluralism and how much autonomy and recognition, if any, was to be given non-majority ethnic groups that constituted a growing sector of the Canadian population.

In drawing up legislation to end bi-lingualism, research questions on the efficacy of learning a second language were simply not addressed. At that time there was a paucity of data on whether children whose mother tongue was not English would be more likely to succeed in school if they first studied in their native language. A common view of that time was: "It is abundantly clear that the keynote of the correct teaching of English to beginners is the practically exclusive use of that language in the schoolroom, and where this is not bringing in the desired results the fault must be sought in the teacher's personal and professional qualifications."[22]

Advocates of mono-lingualism argued for direct immersion of children in English; the goal being the primacy of English regardless of evidence to the contrary. The thought that bi-lingualism might have merit was not considered. The only exception was Quebec where the presence of a French-speaking majority necessitated that bi-lingualism be an accepted educational alternative. But everywhere else English and only English was

to be dominant. Not surprisingly, Alberta and Saskatchewan chose not to accept the Manitoba bi-lingual clause when they were organized in 1905. The French language question that surfaced so repeatedly in Manitoba was less evident in Alberta and Saskatchawan because of its smaller French-speaking population. But there were important Ukranian , Polish and German settlements in both provinces and the absence of well-qualified teachers was used over and over again as a reason for withholding support for bi-lingual instruction. Once World War I began the Alberta legislature went on record establishing the primacy of English as "being in favor of the English language being the only language permitted to be used as the median of instruction in the schools of Alberta, subject to the provisions of any law now in force in the Province of Alberta on that behalf."[23]

The only exception in Alberta or Saskatchewan to English dominance was the primary course in French which was provided under school law. The pattern of English only was evident everywhere except in French-speaking communities. Of course, parochial schools sponsored by religious denominations fostered German language and culture after similar courses had been deleted from the public schools. But this type of instruction was closely linked to religious practices of various church groups and was therefore not subject to public scrutiny or interference. The Mennonites, Amish and other denominations resided in religiously homogeneous communities that were inward looking in their Weltanschuung; they were not perceived as a threat to the larger Canadian society.

United States - Background

The German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare and its attendant loss of life was the immediate cause of American entry into World War I. Significantly, six senators and fifty representatives most of whom were from midwestern states opposed the war motion arguing the United States should continue to remain neutral.[24] These congressmen and senators were representing the sentiments of millions of American citizens who blamed President Wilson, the Democratic Party, commercial interests on the East Coast, and Anglo-American dominance of United States society for the declaration of war. Unlike Canada, neutralist and anti-British feelings were visible and represented a potent political force in the Great Lakes and Great Plains States.

German Presence

Of the nearly 92 million Americans counted in the 1910 census, more than two and one-half million were born in Germany; it is estimated that an additional five and one-half million were second or third generation German-Americans.[25]

Although there were German settlements in every American state, Germans as a group were concenrated in the Great Lakes and Great Plains states and they were by far the major immigrant group in such urban centers as Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. A little less than one-half of the total population of Milwaukee County was of German ancestry.[26] Despite the large numbers of Germans in the rural and urban American heartland, they were greatly overshadowed regionally and nationally by Anglo-Americans who dominated leadership positions in industry, banking, journalism, government and education.

The German-American community, like their Canadian counter-parts, did not consist of a single entity, but were divided into many sub-groups based on historical, cultural, religious, and political divisions. Roman Catholics comprised the largest single religious bloc and may have accounted for nearly 50 percent of all Germans who had emigrated; this over-representation when compared to Germany is attributable to the large number of immigrants who had their origins in Catholic Bavaria, Baden, Schwabia, and the Rheinland; Protestants were divided between Lutherans, Mennonites, and numerous reformed sects.[27] Not all German-American institutions appeared equally vulnerable to emerging nationalistic pressures. For example, German Catholics were a distinct minority within the Church which was largely dominated by a non-German hierarchy; they were far better insulated from public demands for Americanization than the German-speaking Lutheran and other Protestant churches.

During the period 1914 - 1917, support for the Central Powers and neutralism was not limited to German-American groups. Jews who recently fled Czarist oppression tended to side with Germany against Czarist Russia. Austrian-Hungarians were another sizable immigrant group that had ties to the German Cause.[28] But owing to their recent arrival in America immigrants from eastern and southern Europe could only have a marginal impact on the national consciousness. It was the Irish more than other European nationalities who opposed America's efforts to abandon a neutralist policy. Irish-Americans were in a strong position to influence American foreign affairs.[29] Besides speaking English as a native language, they were for the most part active members of the Democratic Party and had elected numerous spokespersons to Congress, local and state governments.

As early as January 1907, the German-American Central Alliance and the Ancient Order of Hibernians mutually agreed to oppose immigration

restrictions.[30] After 1914, Irish nationalists and Russian Jews were especially visible in their support of the Central Powers.[31]

It would be a mistake to believe the German Government had expressed more than a superficial interest in the language and cultural problems faced by German-Americans. As a matter of fact, the aims and purpose of the German-American Central Alliance, an organization whose pre-World War I membership exceeded two million members was practically unknown in Germany.[32] The onset of World War I forced factions within the German American community to choose sides and it was easy for those sub-groups who favored assimilation to gain an upper hand in an atmosphere where anything foreign was construed to be anti-American. Interestingly, prohibition was legally enacted in 1919 only after the political influence of the German-American bloc was broken. But long before that question was decided the majority of German-Americans correctly saw the movement to restrict bi-lingual education as part of an overall effort to cleanse immigrants of their language and culture in order to force conformity to Anglo-American standards of morality and behavior.

Events taking place in Ireland continuously focused attention on the unsavory aspects of the British occupation. German-Irish Catholic cooperation was further aided by the partial resolution of the religious disputes of previous decades over bilingual parochial schools and church services. In the large urban cities where Germans and Irish frequently shared neighborhoods, marriages between the second and third generations was a common occurance. Given the choice of supporting one of the combatants or neither many Irish-Americans opted for a policy of strict neutrality.

Until the very last hours before war was declared in April, 1917, German-Americans and the institutions they supported, churches, schools, cultural and community groups held out hope for peace and American neutrality. The Columbus, Ohio Express und Westbote reflected a popular view in a charge to its readership that while our sympathies are with the Fatherland these must be replaced with support for our adopted country.[33] The Cincinnatti Westliche-Blatter prophesized that Germans will be watched suspiciously and any sort of protest should be avoided. We must do our duty as American citizens and follow the motto of the Kaiser to "learn to suffer without complaint."[34]

As war approached, the German-American press shifted editorial priorities now becoming intensely loyal to the American cause. The Cincinnati Freie Presse took a popular position of the day when it said:

> "We shall not become Englishmen, and we shall continue to cherish our memories, but with the steadfast devotion we shall stand by our country which will need us now more than ever. We shall watch over her internal peace, and shall make every sacrifice which is demanded of us. And when peace returns, we shall be the intermediaries between the two peoples whom a sad fate has divided, that they may again join hands in the common tasks of peace for the service of mankind.[35]

Once war was declared on April 6, 1917, schools, teachers, and textbooks became the focal points for public animosity to anything German. The teaching of German was linked in the public mind to German-American relations and the status of the German-American community. Hysteria about Germans and their institutions was carried to absurd extremes. Efforts to prohibit the speaking of German publicly was initiated in Staunton, Illinois, Milford, Ohio, and other small midwestern towns. Iowa and South Dakota also prohibited the use of German over the telephone and in any public

assembly where more than three persons were gathered. One-half million Germans were registered by the U.S. Government and three to four million Austrian-Hungarian natinoals. Although there were wild rumors of sabotage, the number of actual incidents were few. One-quarter of a million volunteers of the American Protective League operating with the sanction of the Attorney General monitored the loyalty of U.S. citizens. Despite the fact that 10-15 percent of the soldiers in the American Expeditionary Force was of German extraction and performed their duties admirably, German langauge newspapers in the U.S. had to bend over backwards to satisfy ultra-nationalistic segments of American society.[36]

Censorship along with the removal of German books in libraries and in public schools was commonplace. In Columbus, Ohio, German books were sold by the school board for the sum of fifty cents per hundred pounds.[37] No particular regional pattern to the closing down of German language departments is discernable; for instance, German was dropped by the school systems of New York City, Salt Lake City, Long Beach, California, New Orleans, and Indianapolis.[38]

However, violence towards Germans seemed especially pronounced in the Midwest where German communities were numerous and identifiable. Mob action frequently involved marching to a neighbor's house or place of business and insisting the individuals swear allegiance to the flag and the country. If the crowd was not satisfied, tarring and feathering or beatings often followed. There were several instnaces of murder, including an incident in Collinsville, Illinois where Robert Prager was seized and lyncned.[39] Even though evidence overwhelmingly favored conviction, the alleged perpetrators were freed by a jury after 45 minutes of deliberations.[40]

Language Controversy

A dialogue over the proper place of German in the K-12 curriculum was not possible in American public schools both during and immediately after World War I ended because community pressure for removal of German were far too strong for school boards or public officials to resist. The National Education Association requested Congress in 1918 to pass the Smith-Townes Act that would deny to states a share in federal funds unless they would enforce laws requiring English to be the chief language of instruction in all primary schools, public or private.

By 1918, fifteen states had passed legislature restricting German; seven states had gone beyond Congressional requirements and outlawed all instruction in German up through grade eight. The states that had gone the furthest in restricting German were in the Midwest or Rocky Mountain states: Ohio, Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and South Dakota.[41]

In the 1920's, Anti German feeling was largely replaced by an anger directed toward all symbols of foreign influence. Even though laws specifically directed towards the outlawing of German were officially rescinded on June 4, 1923 in the United States Supreme Court decision, Nebraska vs. Meyer, the damage done to the German language was irreparable.[42] While 1923 signifies the end of officially sponsored acts of discrimination against German language teaching, a legacy of repression continued. For example, in Ohio, Bucyrus, Shaker Heights, Toledo, Springfield, Massilon, and South Euclid did not re-introduce German until five years after the Supreme court decision in Nebraska vs. Meyer was handed down.[43]

Throughout the war years, 1917-1918 and beyond, there was a small but vocal minority that opposed efforts to outlaw or restrict the teaching of German. It took courage in a time of excessive nationalism to hold to the conviction that "Present relations with the German Empire should not affect in any way the policy of the schools in the United States in regards to teaching the German language. The United States is now at war with the Imperial Government of Germany and not with the German language or literature."[44]

A far more widespread view was voiced by the well-known educator Nicholas M. Butler who declared "the study of the German language has been urged in some parts of this country, not because of the intrinsic value of that language and its literature, but rather as a part of a persistent political propaganda intended to wean our country from its Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Celtic foundation and our national interest and national system."[45]

The difficulties confronted by German culture and language classes was in part due to the stereotype of German professor created in the minds of the public. They were considered to be either pro-German in feeling or at best were lukewarm to America's participation in the war. Additionally, the prominence of German in the curricula was dependent partly on the numbers of German-Americans present in a community. The study of German received the most support from German immigrants and second generation or third generation German-Americans. German intellectual prominence and the rise of Germany as a world power in the late 19th and early 20th century further reinforced and strengthened the position of German at all levels of instruction.

According to the 1910 census, out of a total population of 2.8 million people in Michigan, 86,000 were born in Germany.[46] Another 400,000 were of

German ancestry, for a total of 11 percent of the state's population. At Ann Arbor, site of the University of Michigan, 8 percent of the population was German-born.[47] The city was a cultural center for German-speaking people for all southeast Michigan. There were four German language newspapers, several German language Lutheran churches, and a number of German societies made their headquarters there. This German element provided a nucleus for the support of German culture and language activities on the Michigan campus.

Michigan Public Schools

The status of German at the University of Michigan curricula, as elsewhere in the Midwest, was weakened by the sharp drop in elementary and high school language instruction. Before the war, German was taught more extensively in the high schools of Michigan than French, Spanish, and Greek combined. In the Spring of 1918, a questionnaire sent out by the university to 200 secondary schools in the state and in 166 cases the German language was not elected by a single student.[48] It can be seen that the campaign against German was most effective at the elementary and secondary levels.

The German Department of the University of Michigan had a close working relationship with and keen interest in the calibre of high school instruction. Under the direction of the National Security League, a patriotic group which had a branch in Ann Arbor, a hate campaign was initiated against all German cultural institutions. The group succeeded in having the most popular text, Im Vaterland, dropped from many schools. They were able to suppress the German Version of Die Washtenaw Post. "By December, 1917, Saginaw was the only city in Michigan having a population of over 25,000 in which German was taught below the 7th grade."[49] In Ann Arbor,

on the night of April 15, 1918, seven vigilantes (including a county official) desecrated the windows and business offices of six prominent leaders of the Ann Arbor German-American community. As a result, Mayor Ernst M. Wurster issued a proclamation calling attention to the request of Governor Sleeper to avoid mob rule and rebuking the participants in the April 15, 1918 incident.[50]

Due to sharp decreases in high school German enrollment, the University of Michigan Admissions Office was forced to alter its language requirements. It became possible to offer one unit of German and one unit of another foreign language in lieu of the usual two unit sequence. The German language instruction continued to decline after the end of the war and never regained its former position at Michigan. This decline serves as an example of how curricula choices was influenced by nationalistic excesses. In 1915, 96.3 percent of accredited high schools offered German; this decreased to 7.5 percent in 1920.[51]

The failure of the University of Michigan faculty and administrators to speak out more forcefully on the side of academic freedom exacerbated the problems of the German Department and those students who may have wanted to take German and were afraid to do so because of peer pressures.

As in Canada, the overt persecution of German-Americans occurred in a brief span of time and was directed primarily against German sponsored institutions rather than German-Americans as individuals. Germans who had become assimilated or vocally embraced the Allied cause were largely immune from the extenral threats to themselves or their affiliated organizations. Acts of discrimination were also made difficult by the size of the German community, its presence in all states of the Union and the physical similarities between German-Americans and Americans of other European origins.

While there were numerous instances of cooperation between German-Americans and members of other ethnic groups in establishing a common front against Britain, the potential for such an effort was limited. The Irish were not so much pro-German as they were anti-British; Russian Jews sympathized with the Central Powers because of the corruption and anti-Semetic policies of Czarist Russia; German Jews were but a small minority in the total American-Jewish population and were in no position to influence a larger body of Yiddish-speaking eastern Europeans; moreover, immigrants from the Austrian-Hungarian Empire were overwhelmingly Slavic in their origins and had acquired little political influence. As soon as war appeared imminent, support for the Central Powers evaporated among every non-Germanic nationality. More important, the campaign of President Wilson against hyphenated Americans was successful in neutralizing the German-American vote while at the same time appealing to a much larger electorate. Thus, the German-American struggle to continue bi-lingual schools and church services alienated many assimilated Americans including a sizable segment of the German-American community itself who saw in the effort a lack of commitment to American institutions and customs.

By relying so heavily on language as the chief means of perpetuating ethnic consciousness German-Americans became an easy target of criticism from those who questioned their loyalty. To the majority of Americans, German was a foreign language and when German-Americans clung to it so rigidly they gave the impression they had more sympathies with Germany than America.

In contrast, Anglo-Americans and Anglo-Canadians were not dependent on language as a way of maintaining their ethnic identity. In addition to numerical superiority, the descendents of immigrants from Britain were able to assert their political, economic, and cultural dominance over

German-Americans and German-Canadians and to withstand the challenge from every other ethnic group; this trend has persisted to this day.

The assimilation of the immigrant has been a familiar epic in North American history; what is less understood is the extent to which advocates of assimilation were prepared to go to achieve their aims. Frances Kellor, a prominent spokesperson for Americanization seemed to welcome the onset of World War I when "she urged Americans to dedicate themselves to what she termed their forgotten responsibility that of making Americans of the people that have come to (the nation's) shores."[52]

In response to the demands for an increased emphasis on Americanism schools even began to give grades in citizenship "as the workers use of English on the job had become a gauge of his level of Americanization, so now did children's behavior in the classroom become a measure of their level of citizenship, a measure of their dedication to the creation of a happy, harmonious America."[53] Using these criteria, advocates of assimilation sought to impose ideological purity on immigrants along with other sectors of the population. The National Education Association was in the forefront of this movement and recommended that Congress "require a year of compulsory, civic and vocational training for all young people in the United States. For anyone, young or old, who could not read English, the NEA requested legal provision for compulsory classes in Americanization."[54]

Although this legislation was not enacted, the message was not lost on German communities who were often portrayed in the newspapers, schools and by politicians as potentially disloyal.[55]

Confronted by pressures real and imagined the majority of German-Americans sought to relinquish their national identity. While the decision

to do so was personal, it took on a collective dimension in the Midwest. According to the 1910 Census, the percentage of Nebraska residents who declared themselves to be of German origin was 14.7 percent; yet in the Census of 1920 the percentage had declined more than three-fold to 4.4 percent.[56] Since there were over one million Nebraskans the disappearance of over 100,000 Germans was not a coincidence; it mirrors rather dramatically the effectiveness of the Americanization campaign and its psychological impact on individual Germans. The pattern of ethnic denial affected all sections of Nebraska from urban Douglas County (Omaha) where the percentage of Germans declined from 13.8 percent in 1910 to 4.4 percent in 1920; predominantly rural counties like Red Willow (McCook) close to the Kansas border 200 miles away were similarly affected.[57]

In the state of Wisconsin 400 miles to the east the percentage of Germans decreased from 28.9 percent in 1910 to 6.6 percent in 1920.[58] The declines were state-wide from Kenosha and Milwaukee in the southeast to LaCrosse, Eau Claire, and Ashland in the west and northwest. Regardless of size of the county, number and percentage of Germans and whether rural or urban the response of Germans to the Americanization movement was to discard their ethnic origins.

The forces of assimilation could claim nearly a total victory over those German-Americans who wanted to retain their language and ethnic distinctiveness into the 1920's and beyond. Not surprisingly, only a small remnant of what was America's leading linguistic and ethnic minority has survived with any degree of cohesiveness into the post-World War II era. Even so, in the 1980 Census over 50 million Americans still identified themselves as of German background. Despite long residence in America and only faint ties with present-day Germany, its language and culture, German-Americans still exceed the Hispanic population by at least 30 million. Of

course, this advantage does not translate into bi-lingual skills or a strong ethnic awareness. To the majority of German-Americans these issues were fought and lost over sixty years ago and in the absence of further immigration there is no turning back on what has already been decided.[59]

The zenith of German cultural accomplishments and influence in North America occurred in the decades just before and after the turn of the century. In 1900, there were 613 German language newspapers in the United States compared to 35 Italian, 33 Polish, 39 Spanish and fully one-third of the entire Cincinnatti elementary school enrollment were learning German throughout the primary grades; a similar pattern prevailed in Milwaukee, Cleveland, St. Louis, Dubuque, St. Paul and across the Mid-west.[60] Yet, by 1914, the German-American community was already in a state of decline due to assimilation. It is conceivable that had World War I not broken out the German-American community would have lost anyway on the issues of bi-lingual schools, church services and prohibition. Undoubtedly, the onset of the War hastened the loss of ethnic identity and brought about widespread violations of academic and personal freedom.

The reaction of German-Canadians to wartime cultural and linguistic repression was strikingly similar to Germans living in the United States. A phenomenon of ethnic denial was vividly expressed in the sharp decline of those declaring Germany ancestry from 5.6 percent in the 1911 Census to 3.4 percent a decade later.[61] Although Germans increased to 4.6 in the 1931 Census, this was still 20 percent below their pre-World War I percentage.

It is clear these decreases were not random--German-Canadians opted en masse for Austrian identity since this group was listed as a separate category and doubled its percentage of the Canadian population during the war era from 0.6 percent in 1911 to 1.2 percent in 1921.[62] By 1931, the Austrian percentage had receded to its pre-war level.[63]

No other North American ethnic group, past or present, has attempted so forcefully to officially conceal their ethnic origins. One must attribute this reaction to the wave of repression that swept the Continent and enveloped anyone with a German past.

Becoming a true Canadian or American meant relinquishing one's language and identity, in favor of the dominant Anglo-American culture. While other nationality groups may have encountered similar prejudice, German-Canadians and Americans had the alternative of disappearing into the larger society. Of course, the history and experience of each ethnic group at any time tends to be unique so one must be cautious about making comparisons. But the field of North-American ethnic research deserves much greater attention, not only because of the need for a more adequate information base; we must also keep guard against a repetition of past historical wrongs.

The implications of the German-Canadian experience extend to the present era and is tied to the subordinate position accorded European ethnic groups other than French or English. Both French and English are official languages of Canada and this preference carries with it political, economic, social, cultural and psychological connotations.

Since nearly all German-Canadians reside in predominantly English-speaking areas, they have had no other option but to join the Anglo-Canadian group. Presently, there are no advantages or inducements in remaining a partly assimilated German-Canadian. The valient efforts of German-Canadians, Poles, Italians, Porguguese, and others to perpetuate their language, culture, and traditions appear doomed. Despite pious pronouncements to the contrary, cultural pluralism means French or English and nothing else.

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[5]Sissons, pp. 67-68.

[6]Ibid., p. 100.

[7]Schull, p. 204.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Sissons, p. 116-117.

[11]Ibid., pp. 117-118.

[12]Ibid., pp. 123-141.

[13]Ibid., p. 141.

[14]Ibid., pp, 145-146.

[15]Ibid., pp. 154-155.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Donald Avery, "The Radical Alien and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919," in The West and the Nation, Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook (editors), Toronto: McClelland and Steward, Ltd., 1976, p. 208-209.

[18]Ibid, p. 218.

[19]Sissons, p. 124.

[20]Avery, pp. 219-220.

[21]Sissons, pp. 148-149.

[22]Ibid., pp. 205-209.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Four of the six senators were from Midwestern states including La Follette of Wisconsin and Norris of Nebraska, both of whom became leaders in opposition to the war. Clifford Nelson, German American Political Behavior in Nebraska and Wisconsin, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Publication No. 217, 1972, pp. 25-26.

[25]Phillip Gleason, The Conservative Reformers, German-American Catholics and the Social Order, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968, pp. 46-47.

[26]Nelson, pp. 80-83. According to the 1910 Census figures for Wisconsin, Milwaukee County was 48.1 percent German. There were five other counties in the state that were more than 40 percent German-American, but in no county could German-Americans claim an absolute majority of the population.

[27]Frederick, C. Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, German-Americans and World War I, De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974, pp. 35-41.

[28]Clifton J. Child, The German-Americans in Politics, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1939, p. 23.

[29]Ibid., pp. 607. In a number of cities, German-Irish cooperative organizations were established to oppose foreign entanglements, immigration restrictions and threats to civil liberties.

[30]Child, p. 6.

[31]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[32]Ibid., pp. 177-178.

[33]Carl Wittke, German-Americans and the World War. Columbus: The Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1936, pp. 122-123.

[34]Ibid., pp. 123.

[35]Ibid., p. 133.

[36]Ronald Fernandez, "Getting Germans to Fight German: The Americanization of World War I," The Journal of Ethnic Studies, 9:2, (Summer, 1981), pp. 53-54.

[37]Wittke, German-American and the World War, p. 182.

[38]Ibid., pp. 180-182.

[39]Luebke, pp. 1-24.

[40]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[41]Ibid., pp. 312-313.

[42]Ibid.